

**Talbot County Tourism Board
Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, December 12, 2018

8:30 a.m.

215 Bay Street, Conference Room #1, Easton, MD 21601

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at 8:49 a.m.

Board Members Present: Judy Bixler, John Booth, Kelley Cox, Angela Eade, Ian Fleming, Tracey Johns, Harold Klinger, Laura Price, Jeff Schneider, Ben Simons, Kim Weller, Cassandra Vanhooser

Board Members Absent: Al Silverstein, Waitman Vanorsdale

Recording Secretary: Candace Harris

Staff: Sam Shoge

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the October 2018 meeting were presented. Tracey Johns moved that the minutes be accepted with corrections. Jeff Schneider seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

III. Year In Review

Year in Review Presentation for 2018: Ms. Vanhooser and Mr. Shoge gave a Year-In-Review presentation to show all Economic Development and Tourism accomplished in 2018. Milestones included: The Year of Frederick Douglass, the groundbreaking for the Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe, and the 230th anniversary of The Hill Community in Easton

The Maryland Office of Tourism Development honored the Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Talbot County FD200 Committee, Anne Arundel County FD200 Committee, Baltimore City FD200 Committee, and the Commission on African American History and Heritage with the Leveraging Partnership Award for creating partnerships that improved visitation to Maryland.

The team summarized the developments on Tilghman Island, including the opening of Wylder Hotel and new owners for Tilghman Island Inn. Talbot County successfully applied for an Enterprise Zone designation for portions of the island, and partnered with the town of Easton for an Enterprise Zone expansion there. They also were instrumental in passing enabling legislation for the Property Assessed Clean Energy Program

(Commercial PACE) that will allow businesses to finance energy upgrades and have the bill attached to their property tax invoice.

Ms. Vanhooser and Mr. Shoge have also worked on a video series that showcase the best of Talbot County for both tourism and economic development. This is an expanded effort from the Business Appreciation Breakfast in 2018.

2017 Numbers: Ms. Vanhooser distributed the Tourism Economic Impact Study for calendar year 2017. Talbot County generates \$206 million in total revenue and supports 1,981 jobs. Revenue was down from \$214 million in 2016, showing the effects of several closed properties. Employment was up, however, reflecting national trends. Ms. Price asked what categories go into making up the number for second homes? Ms. Vanhooser will try to find out an answer to this question.

IV. Old Business

Maryland Travel and Tourism Summit: Talbot County was well represented at MTTs this year. Several board members attended, including Judy Bixler, Tracey Johns, and Kim Weller. The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum won an award from the Maryland Tourism Coalition for Best Digital Campaign. The Eastern Shore Tourism Directors won a Shark Tank-like competition called Crab Tank on the Choptank. Their “Chase the Blue Crab” marketing initiative will target bus groups and will be backed by \$50,000 in marketing funds.

Open Position on Board: Ms. Vanhooser reached out to Amy Haines and Chris Agharabi, and they both refused a position on the Board representing restaurants. She has left a message for Sydney Tron at Gourmet by the Bay. Mr. Fleming then stated that Mark Salter is willing to join the Board. Mr. Schneider nominated Mark Salter and Harold Klinger seconded the motion. Mr. Salter’s nomination was approved by unanimous vote. Ms. Vanhooser will write the letter and submit it to the County Council for approval.

V. New Business

Short -Term Rentals: Ms. Vanhooser discussed the letter by Jack Fisher in the paper. She noted that there is a great deal of misinformation being circulated, and she believes the Tourism Board should get the tourism-related facts out. The Board also discussed the nominees for the County’s short-term rental board. There will be no interviews for the short-term rental board; it will be done in closed session. Ms. Price asked the Board to make their opinions known to the Council if they feel the decision should be done in open session. Ms. Vanhooser also stated that we need to get serious about collecting the tax. Harold Klinger, Angela Eade, and Kelley Cox volunteered to work with Ms. Vanhooser on the short-term rental issues.

Restaurant Week: Ms. Vanhooser is working on a communications plan for Restaurant Week. She has suggested that this be the last year for this promotion and would like

volunteers for a work group to decide what, if anything, we should do to replace Restaurant Week.

- VI.** Representatives from each of the towns reported on news and events taking place in their jurisdictions.
- VII.** The January meeting was canceled because many board members have commitments. Jeff Schneider made a motion to meet in February, and Harold Klinger seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The next Meeting will be held on February 13, 2019, at 8:30 a.m.
- VIII.** Adjournment. Jeff Schneider made the motion to adjourn. Kelley Cox seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:36 a.m.